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ABSTRACT

This report outlines the proceedings of a symposium held to discuss ways of strengthening linkages and transitions between pre-kindergarten programs and early elementary school. The 63 symposium participants included Head Start representatives, elementary school teachers and principals, state and federal department of education employees, university faculty, and parents. Participants came from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The participants discussed the meaning of linkages and transition, shared materials about successful practices for educating children in the southeastern United States, examined the latest research on issues related to transition, and formulated goals for collaborating to improve transition programs in their individual states. The report provides: (1) the agenda of the two-day meeting; (2) summaries of the keynote address and concurrent sessions on assessment techniques, retention, family support, and collaboration; (3) profiles of five successful transition-related programs presented at the symposium; (4) summaries of small-group discussions concerning the sharing of successful practices; and (5) summaries of individual state reports prepared by participants. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all participants are included. (MDH)

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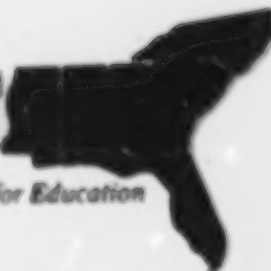
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EARLY CHILDHOOD REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

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South Eastern Regional Vision for Education



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Affiliated with:

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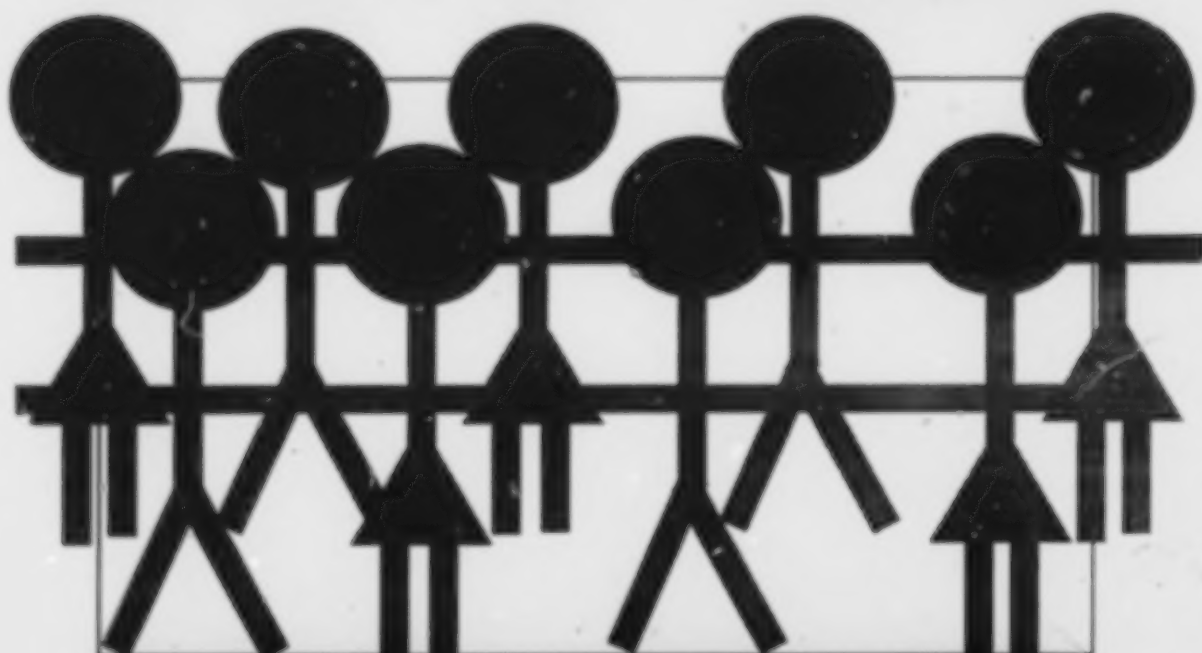
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EARLY CHILDHOOD REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Sponsored by SERVE and SACUS



*IMPROVING LINKAGES—
THE CHALLENGE FOR THE SOUTHEAST*

Atlanta Airport Hilton
Atlanta, Georgia

INTRODUCTION

On November 21 and 22, 1991, 63 people from the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina came together to discuss how to strengthen linkages and the transition between pre-kindergarten programs and early elementary school. Symposium participants included Head Start representatives, elementary school teachers and principals, state and federal department of education employees, university faculty, and parents. The theme for the gathering was "Improving Linkages—The Challenge for the Southeast," and the agenda allowed for a variety of activities to define, address, plan for, and accept this challenge.

During the two-day symposium, participants discussed the meaning of linkages and transition, shared materials and information about successful practices for educating young children in the Southeast, received the latest research information on issues related to transition, and initiated a vision for collaborating together to meet the challenge in their individual states. The symposium was sponsored by SERVE (SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education) and SACUS (Southern Association on Children Under Six), and was coordinated by SERVEing Young Children—a SERVE project that focuses on the first national education goal.

This regional symposium continues national efforts to increase awareness of and involvement in the need to improve linkages. In September, 1991, a national policy forum was held which addressed the same issues; participants from the southeast region met together and discussed their needs and plans for action. The results of these discussions guided plans for the regional symposium, including what questions needed to be addressed and what issues should be emphasized. Regional and national efforts are gaining a common focus that emphasizes that "all children in America will start school ready to learn" by encouraging collaboration that will not only prepare students for school but will prepare schools for students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

NOVEMBER 21 AND 22, 1991
ATLANTA AIRPORT HILTON

Improving Linkages—The Challenge for the Southeast

AGENDA

DAY ONE

8:30 - 10:00 Registration, Networking, and Coffee—Lobby

10:00 - 11:15 General Session—Grand Salon C

10:00-10:30 Greetings and Introductions

Overview of SERVE

Video tape: "SERVE—A Regional Perspective"

Overview and Expectations for the Symposium

Nancy Livesay, Project Coordinator for *SERVEing Young Children*

The Challenge

10:30-11:15 Keynote Speaker
Patricia L. Willis, Executive Director, BellSouth Foundation
"The Imperative for Collaboration"

Introduction of Keynote Speaker: Roy Forbes, Executive Director, SERVE

Reactions to The Challenge

11:15 - 12:15 State Groups

Assess the status of your state in the area of transitions. Conduct an informal needs assessment as a first step in working towards developing a plan of action. Identify state issues to be addressed.

Room Assignments:

Alabama and North Carolina—Rabun

Mississippi—Chattahoochee F

Florida—Lobby

Georgia—Grand Salon G

South Carolina—Grand Salon H

12:15 - 1:45 Lunch Buffet—Magnolia Room

Addressing the Challenge

1:45 - 2:45 Concurrent Sessions

1. *Authentic Assessment Techniques*

Room Assignment: Grand Salon H

Presenter: Cathy Grace, Executive Director, SACUS

The use of the portfolio method of assessment provides a continuous approach to evaluating the child. Authentic work samples and products generated by the child in a natural learning setting provide a more credible and meaningful assessment. This session will present information about how to assess young children effectively.

2. *Supporting Families in Transition from Head Start to Public School*

Room Assignment: Rabun

Presenters: Janice England, Early Childhood Program Specialist,
Birmingham Public Schools

Gayle Cunningham, JCCEO Head Start Director, Birmingham

This session will focus on how a large urban school district and a local Head Start (with a community action agency grantee) developed and implemented a cooperative transition plan to ease Head Start children and their parents into public school. Descriptions of the steps taken for preparing children and parents for the transition, the development of a coordinated Head Start through third grade curriculum, and the procedure taken for enhancing communication between Head Start and public school staff will be discussed. An overview of Birmingham Schools' Even Start Family Literacy Project and the Head Start Parent-Child Center will also be presented.

3. *We Take Collaboration for Grant-ed*

Room Assignment: Grand Salon G

Presenters: Larry Davis, South Carolina Health and Human Services
Hannah Meadors, Early Childhood Consultant, Greenville, SC
Lindsey Cole, Principal, Cone Elementary School, SC
Patty Jones, Head Start Director, SC

Building interagency partnerships is neither as difficult nor as easy as we think. This presentation demonstrates how Head Start and the Greenville County Schools have developed a partnership to help systems serve children and families. Creativity, cooperation, tenacity, professionalism, and understanding children, families, and bureaucracies are necessary ingredients in this recipe for transition.

4. *Retention - A Gift of Time or A Sentence to Failure?*

Room Assignment: Chattahoochee F

Presenter: Ann Levy, President, SACUS

Retention is a hot issue in education today. In this session, participants will discuss the positive and negative aspects of "holding children back." A summary of the latest information on the topic will be presented. The presenter will share information about how Florida and the other southern states are handling this sensitive issue.

- 2:45 - 3:00 Refreshment Break—Lobby
- 3:00 - 4:00 Repeat Concurrent Sessions
- 4:00 - 4:30 The Sharing Success Program—Grand Salon C
- 5:30 - 7:00 Wine and Cheese Hospitality / Networking
Chattahoochee C
- 7:00 Dinner on your own
See list of restaurants in your folder

DAY TWO

Rising to the Challenge

- 8:00 - 9:15 Showcases of Exemplary Transition Programs / Practices
Grand Salon B
Continental Breakfast available in the lobby

1. *Parents in Partnership*
An assessment and instruction program for entering kindergartners
Presenters: Sylvia Lane Oberle, Marcia Epstein, Judy Cox
Moore Alternative School, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
2. *Southpointe Elementary*
A Tesseract Model School
Presenter: Linda Lentin, Dade County Schools, Miami, Florida
3. *Choctaw Indian Schools*
K-3 High/Scope Transition Program
Presenters: Willa Brantley, Billy Williamson, Mandy Walters, Donna Grant,
Patricia Gibson, Glenda Williamson, Leah Kemp, Amy Rhea
Choctaw Tribal Schools, Mississippi
4. *Brentwood Elementary School*
Innovative Programs in Cumberland County Schools
Presenter: Karen Harris, Fayetteville, North Carolina
5. *"DAISEY" Program*
A block grant program in 12 districts
Presenters: Gail and Frank Raymond
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Stating the Challenge

- 9:15 - 10:00 General Session—Grand Salon B
Reflections on The Challenge
Dorothy Routh, Deputy Director, SERVE

Treating the Challenge

10:00 - 11:00 Small Group Round Tables
Sharing successful transition practices

Room Assignments (see color on nametag):

Yellow—Oconee
Green—Chattahoochee D
Blue—Chattahoochee E
Red—Rabun

Communicating the Challenge

11:00 - 12:00 Role Alike Groups
Communicating about common issues

Room Assignments:

District, School Based and Parents—Chattahoochee E
DOE and Federal—Rabun
University—Oconee
Head Start/Day Care—Chattahoochee D

12:00 - 1:15 Luncheon—Chattahoochee B

Planning for the Challenge

1:15 - 2:30 State Groups
Round table discussion of state needs.
Begin developing a state plan of action.

Room Assignments:

Alabama and North Carolina—Chattahoochee D
Mississippi—Chattahoochee E
South Carolina—Oconee
Georgia—Rabun
Florida—Lobby

Accepting the Challenge

2:30 - 3:30 General Session—Grand Salon B
State reports of plans

Meeting the Challenge

3:30 - 4:00 Wrap-up and Adjourn

Keynote Address

"The Imperative for Collaboration"

The imperatives grow out of the fact that resources are fewer, . . . needs are greater, . . . and the stakes are higher.

—Willis

Patricia L. Willis, Executive Director of the BellSouth Foundation, opened the symposium with the keynote address. Her talk, "The Imperative for Collaboration," emphasized that collaboration is needed but that all stakeholders—schools, businesses, state agencies, and others—must redefine their roles and the purpose for collaboration if we are going to meet the challenge for the Southeast. This provided a foundation for further discussions among participants. Speaking as a representative of the business world, Willis explained that the role of business in that collaboration must be clarified and understood by educators, government, and the businesses themselves.

Willis explained that corporate dollars are scarce, and recent business-related activities in the country have made philanthropy more difficult. Companies must now be concerned with the global marketplace, especially when they are merging with or being bought by foreign investors. At the same time, federal support to education and other social needs are being cut. Businesses must set priorities; needs are expanding but the resources have not.

With fewer funds available for giving, and with so many societal needs to choose from, corporations must be convinced that a better educated society will benefit them directly. Unfortunately, the need for a more capable work force is not enough of an incentive for American businesses to become involved: workers can be imported from other countries, companies can move to other countries, or technologies can be developed to get the jobs done. However, the need to sustain the social and democratic values of our country—those values which allow businesses to succeed—is a critical issue which corporations cannot ignore, and is a goal which cannot be achieved without improving education. Young people must be taught the skills which prepare them to participate in and care about our democratic system. This is an imperative for school/business collaboration.

Willis reminded participants that teachers are overburdened with curricular requirements such as drug and sex education or gun safety; this is a symptom of the lack of collaboration. Each stakeholder has his/her own goals and priorities which make collaboration difficult but all the more necessary. Willis suggests that collaborators should understand that they have an "undivided, partial interest" in the endeavor. If each person realizes that s/he is only "one piece of the show," but that the entire show is his/hers, everyone takes responsibility for the collaboration, and everybody benefits from its success.

Concurrent Sessions

*You must work—we must
all work—to make this
world worthy of its children.*

—Pablo Casals

Joy and Sorrows

On the afternoon of the first day, symposium participants were invited to choose two of four presentations which addressed the challenge to improve linkages. These presentations provided further information on which the southeastern states could base their plans of action. Two of the sessions discussed the latest research on key issues in early childhood education; one focused on assessment, and the other on retention. The other two sessions presented the process and practices involved in successful, collaborative transition programs: the presenters from Alabama provided a multitude of activities that foster improved transition, while the presentation from South Carolina emphasized the constraints to and necessary ingredients for successful collaboration.

Authentic Assessment Techniques

Presenter Cathy Grace discussed traditional assessment as a barrier to successful transition, and provided suggestions for authentic assessments for young children. Grace emphasized that educators need to consider assessment techniques when they institute developmentally appropriate practices. Standardized tests are inappropriate for young children, and are certainly not authentic. The questions on these tests are not realistic or sensible to children, and the method of administration is foreign in their experiences. Standardized test scores are usually culturally biased, misrepresentative, and incorrectly used to compare students, schools, and districts.

Authentic assessment, on the other hand, uses common sense techniques to track an individual child's development. Because it is continuous, it reveals a truer picture of a child's strengths and weaknesses than a one-day, one-time test. Portfolios, which are a collection of the child's work over a period of time, are a common form of authentic assessment; these examples of the student's work represent milestones of progress. Teachers can use audio and video tapes, photographs, writing samples, projects, interviews, and

observations to document the child's progress. Competition between students and between schools is eliminated because the data merely compare one child's work against his/her own past achievements.

Grace explained that authentic assessment will require some staff development and teacher training before it can be properly used. The need for this kind of assessment must be emphasized, and teachers may need training in observational and interviewing techniques, and in how to evaluate the portfolio. Also, teachers need to understand that this form of assessment need not take more time; it can be built into the instructional period. Parents will also need some explanation of this form of assessment, but they will probably be able to make better sense of it than test scores. Authentic assessment is key to improving our understanding of the development and educational needs of young children.

Retention—A Gift of Time or a Sentence to Failure?

Ann Levy discussed the controversial issue of retention by looking at its advantages and disadvantages, especially in relation to practices in Florida. She was quick to point out that transitional classes—which have been developed to provide some students the opportunity for an additional year of developmental gains before entering first grade—are a form of retention because they cause a student to be overage for his/her grade. The question she raised was whether retention is a "gift of time" for students who are not academically or socially ready to be promoted, or is a "sentence to failure," since the great majority of retained students drop out of school.

Florida, Levy said, is a "gift of time" state, but that this may be changing as more legislative groups and professional associations discourage retention. Policy makers are especially aware of the added costs of allowing a student to repeat a grade. However, increasing pressure from taxpayers and business to produce outcomes in the form of test scores has encouraged retention. Also, many teachers believe that retention will give students more time to mature and grasp basic concepts; these teachers are afraid to promote students who will not be able to handle the increasingly academic demands of the elementary grades.

Despite these beliefs, research indicates that retention does not improve the achievement of children on standardized tests. Research also shows that low-achieving children, who are promoted, consistently score higher on social-emotional measures than retained children with similar achievement levels. Students who are overage-for-grade because of retention or other reasons are more likely to eventually drop out of school than their right-age peers. Transitional classes tend to worsen the problem because, since the low-achieving students have been removed to their own classes, "regular" classes become more academic and developmentally inappropriate.

The solution, according to Levy, is to figure out new ways of teaching which will allow students to keep up with their peers, both in age and achievement. Possible strategies include summer or Saturday tutoring or continuous progress schools. The opinions of educators must also be changed, so that they understand the problems with retention and the need to educate students more effectively.

Supporting Families in Transition from Head Start to Public School

Presenters Gayle Cunningham and Janice England explained how Head Start and the Birmingham Public Schools have collaborated successfully to improve transitions for young children. Beginning with a shared philosophy that we must improve educational continuity for children from Head Start to third grade, these women worked together to place fourteen Head Start classrooms in public elementary schools, and to get principals, teachers, and parents involved in this project. The presenters emphasized that success depends upon administrative support, and strong district leadership.

The participants in this endeavor received a grant to hire a transition coordinator to help them plan activities to make this collaboration work. Together, they identified four areas of focus for the collaboration:

- provide program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula,
- maintain ongoing communication and cooperation between Head Start and public schools,
- prepare children for transition, and
- involve parents in the transition.

After they had put Head Start classrooms into the public schools, they were able to more adequately address the transitional needs of their district through the following activities:

- surveying teachers about their views on early childhood curriculum
- rewriting the curriculum for Head Start through third grade to make it more interdisciplinary and developmentally appropriate
- providing inservice training to elementary and Head Start teachers on developmentally appropriate practices and classroom management
- setting aside every Monday at the Head Start centers for teacher training
- bringing principals and Head Start teachers to the elementary schools to observe
- providing principals with three days of workshops and training on early childhood education
- providing Head Start parents with a book on how to get their children ready for elementary school
- developing a summer calendar of activities for parents and children
- providing spring-time workshops and home visits to inform parents about the services of the elementary school, as well as about registration procedures.

All these activities have focused on increasing communication between Head Start and the elementary grades and on improving students' and parents' transition experiences so that they will remain involved in the educational process.

We Take Collaboration for Grant-ed

Lindsey Cole, Larry Davis, Patty Jones, and Hannah Meadors discussed a collaborative effort between Head Start and Cone Elementary School in Greenville, South Carolina. The presenters provided information about the community and school, the history of the collaboration, obstacles to the effort, and showed a video called "A Day in the Life of a Four-Year Old." The purpose of this collaboration was to improve the transition of Head Start students to public school by busing them to Cone Elementary for lunch and afternoon activities each day. This arrangement gave students a structure and continuity to their day and year which home life often did not provide. It also allowed teachers from the two programs to see and talk to each other on a regular basis, thus improving the continuity of instruction between Head Start and kindergarten.

Of course, the collaborators encountered some difficulties:

- they had to provide and re-route bus transportation,
- holidays had to correspond between both schools,
- administrators needed to support the project, and
- schools had to seek parental understanding and participation.

The presenters emphasized that everyone involved believed that this project could work, and were willing to take risks. They respected one another as professionals and developed trust between them. They also agreed on one important philosophy: we must get schools ready to meet children, wherever those children might be in their development. The presentation revealed that collaboration is "neither as difficult nor as easy as we think."

The Sharing Success Program

*People seldom improve
when they have no other
model but themselves to
copy after.*

—Goldsmith

At the close of the first day, Caroline Follman, Program Specialist for SERVEing Young Children, introduced the Sharing Success Program on Exemplary Transition Practices. This program will allow educators to nominate their school or organization for regional recognition in a publication, and possibly for a site visit and inclusion in a Sharing Success video. In the nomination, programs must describe their activities and demonstrate success in improving transitions for young children. Symposium participants were provided with nomination forms; questions or requests for forms should be addressed to SERVEing Young Children, 345 S. Magnolia, Suite D-23, Tallahassee, FL 32301-2950, 800-352-6001.

Showcases

*And it is still true, no matter
how old you are—when you
go out into the world, it is
best to hold hands and stick
together.*

—Robert Fulghum

All I Really Need to Know I
Learned in Kindergarten

At the start of Day Two, participants were invited to view and receive information from a variety of showcases on successful, transition-related programs. Presenters constructed displays which included videos, photographs, and hand-outs, and participants wandered among the displays and talked informally with the presenters. These showcases emphasized the need to share information about successful practices when attempting to improve linkages. Brief descriptions of the programs which were showcased are presented below:

DAISEY — Developmental Assessment and Instruction for Success in the Early Years

The DAISEY program, designed by Gail Raymond of the University of South Carolina, is a combination of testing instruments and instructional activities for children from three to five years of age. It is not intended as a total curriculum, but as a supplement to preschool programs for at-risk children in South Carolina. "The major purpose of the DAISEY is to increase the likelihood that preschool children from poor, rural areas of the state will succeed in elementary school" (handout). DAISEY uses a whole-language approach, and emphasizes three areas of development: spoken language, problem solving, and motor skills. Research to support the activities and the screening and school readiness tests was conducted with low-income children in South Carolina. DAISEY is currently in use in 50 child development centers, twelve public schools, and one Head Start program.

Fellowship Mission

Lucy Williams, 521 Kelly Street SE, Atlanta, GA 30312 (404) 523-5566
The Fellowship Mission is an inner-city, Christian preschool which has been in existence for thirty years. It is run by volunteers and financed solely by private donations. It resides in a small, renovated house in the neighborhood of the children it serves. The children are from low-income households and represent various cultures;

one-third are Spanish-speaking and begin to learn English at Fellowship Mission.⁶ In an effort to provide continued support to their "graduates," the Mission offers a Bible School to Mission alumni through age 12; children over twelve are trained as counselors to help with Bible School. Throughout the year, there are monthly Teen Nights during which former students, ages six through nineteen, meet at the house to hold meetings with volunteer social workers, police officers, counselors, etc. According to Williams, none of the children who have graduated from Fellowship Mission have dropped out of school.

South Pointe Elementary School

At South Pointe Elementary, teachers are experimenting with an alternative educational approach by collaborating with the Dade County Public Schools and a private corporation—Education Alternatives, Inc. The educational approach they are using is based on a private school model called the Tesseract School; however, South Pointe is an inner-city, public school which serves low-income, transient students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. With paid interns from the University of Miami, the adult/student ratio is kept quite low. The new building is designed to allow classes to come together in larger "communities," and the use of tables and moveable furniture, instead of desks, encourages cooperative learning and a flexible curriculum. According to Linda Lentin, Lead Teacher, each child works with his/her teacher and parents to develop a personal education plan, and the students are expected to help decide on the learning activities for each day. South Pointe teachers do not give grades and students are involved in their own evaluations. This school is a primary example of a business/school collaboration effort which has succeeded.

Parents in Partnership: ReadySet

ReadySet, a component of the Parents in Partnership program at Moore Alternative Elementary School, pairs experienced parent volunteers with the parents of incoming kindergartners who have been identified as deficient in certain fundamental skills for reading, math, and language development. The parent volunteers make home visits during the summer to these families; they provide training and materials which will encourage the parents to work on these skills through at-home activities. Not only does this program benefit the students by improving their initial transition to kindergarten, but it builds better communication between parents, between parents and their children, and between parents and the school. The Parents in Partnership program is a grass-roots activity, begun by Sylvia Lane Oberle, to improve the parental transition from preschool to elementary school, and to encourage better parental involvement in school activities.

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

The High/Scope Early Childhood Education Project

Teachers and administrators came to represent the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and to present information on a collaboration effort between High/Scope and early childhood educators. The Choctaw school system's "Early Childhood Education Project is unique for High/Scope because it is the first in which High/Scope is providing training for a comprehensive educational program serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary-aged children" (Powell, A., 1991, article in *High/Scope ReSource*). With this broad focus, continuity between grades is enhanced as teachers communicate with one another and use the same developmentally appropriate, instructional practices. Continuity between home and school is also improved; teachers incorporate elements of the Choctaw language and culture into their classrooms and curricula, and training by the High/Scope staff emphasizes family education and involvement activities.

Small Group Discussions

*Decide to network. . .
Networking is the new
freedom, the new
democracy, a new
form of happiness.*

—Robert Muller

During the two days of the symposium, participants met in small groups to discuss the challenge and to focus on taking action. One small-group session allowed randomly grouped participants to share successful practices related to early childhood education and improving transitions. Another small group session allowed participants to meet according to their occupational roles. Lastly, groups were divided according to their state of residence to prepare a state plan to accept and address the challenge. As a precursor to these discussions, Dorothy Routh, Deputy Director of SERVE, gave a talk which reflected on activities of the previous day and encouraged participants to face the challenge with pride and hope. Routh discussed the needs and strengths of the Southeast, and outlined regional and national activities—such as SERVE's publications—which could help in the effort to improve linkages. She also urged participants to keep in mind two key concepts related to educational improvement: taking a systemic approach to change, and using collaboration to provide comprehensive services to children and their families.

Sharing Successful Practices

Some of the successful programs discussed during this session are listed below:

- The Follow-Through Project which provides teacher training in assessment and instruction using Piagetian techniques (NC, SC, MS, GA)
- Hall Kent Elementary School which has an early childhood handicap program, integrated instruction of subjects, increased parent-child communication, and an innovative mathematics program based on the work of Constance Kamii, and which uses a whole-language teaching approach (AL)
- Orange County which requires teachers to make home visits during the summer to encourage parent involvement (FL)

- Atlanta Cooperative Preschool which requires parents to help out, and provides activities (such as eating lunch at the elementary school cafeteria) to ready children for kindergarten (GA)
- The Natchez Parent Center which trains parents to use educational materials and allows them to check out the materials to use with their children (MS)
- Target 2000—South Carolina's School Reform for the Next Decade Act— which, among other things, allows for voluntary, half-day programs for four- year-olds and parent education programs.(SC)

Participants also identified pertinent issues which they thought must be addressed when attempting to improve transition. Some of the issues discussed in these groups included parent involvement, intervention for children 0-3 years of age, bus transportation, assessment, university preparation of teachers and communication between 2- and 4-year institutions, and use of terminology in discussions about transition.

Role-Alike Groups

The following issues were discussed by the role-alike groups. The discussions revealed that everyone who attempts to meet the challenge has specific needs and a specific role to play in the improvement effort.

District, School Based, and Parents—increasing the number of pre-kindergarten classes located in elementary schools, decreasing the parents' and children's fears of the "unknown," instituting a district-level early childhood education coordinator, improving licensing and certification requirements, and diminishing the impact of inappropriate testing requirements.

State DOE and Federal—improving parent involvement and parent training, increasing interagency collaboration, and seeking designated funding sources.

University—improving teacher training and certification, communicating research to policy makers, understanding the research and practices that have been tried in the past, improving the relationship between universities and state departments, and collaborating to conduct research.

Head Start/Day Care—seeking supportive attitudes from administrative leadership, improving the continuity of education through curriculum, assessment, and training, using appropriate screening methods, creating a list of regional High/Scope endorsed trainers, and increasing funding sources.

State Groups and Reports

Participants from each state came together twice to prepare a report (which was subsequently presented to the entire group) of a state goal, present status, and plan of action related to meeting the challenge in each state. In the first discussion, participants addressed such questions as "What do we mean by transition?", "What are developmentally appropriate practices?", and "What barriers may prevent us from improving transitions?" They also spent some time getting to know one another and sharing their current roles in improving education for young children. During the second meeting, participants referred to issues which were mentioned in the first session, and focused their discussion on preparing their state report. These reports are summarized below. (Note: North Carolina was underrepresented on the second day of the symposium, and therefore unable to prepare a state report.)

ALABAMA

State Goal or Vision: To heighten the awareness of the importance of developing partnerships between public schools and community agencies.

Plan of Action: Various agencies and organizations are committed to improving services for young children. There is a need for networking among these groups.

Anticipated Outcomes: Increase the awareness of the need for collaboration. Increase the awareness of the need for collaboration. Increase conference activity and inclusion of early childhood issues in conference agendas.

FLORIDA

State Goal or Vision: Schools and communities will collaborate to prepare children and families for children's success in school.

Present Status: State mandated school-based plans will be developed (by 1993-94) to achieve this goal. Criteria for measuring effectiveness of plans are being developed. State and local full-service school activities are underway, and state support exists for early childhood services. Only 40 percent of needy children are currently being served.

Plan of Action: Develop school improvement plans and provide assistance to implement these plans. Assure continued funding. Collaborate to develop appropriate effectiveness measures. Strengthen interagency efforts at local levels. Expand successful programs, and provide equity between programs. Encourage accreditation efforts.

Anticipated Outcomes: Achieve the goal as stated and measure progress toward the goal.

GEORGIA

State Goal or Vision: To seek commitment within the state to the early education of children from birth to eight years of age.

Present Status: Individual commitment to issues relating to the needs of young children exists,

but efforts come from fragmented special interest groups with different professional backgrounds and priorities.

Plan of Action: Organize a "Coalition for Commitment" to meet, discuss, and act upon common goal as stated above. Identify key players and their current goals. Provide players with research information to support activities. Redefine U.S. readiness goal for state. Promote a public awareness campaign.

MISSISSIPPI

State Goal or Vision: Provide a strategic plan for a total transitional program for the children of the state.

Present Status: Decision-makers and funding sources do not have the knowledge or commitment to improve early childhood education, but avenues for communication exist to promote awareness.

Plan of Action: Provide education about the needs of young children to administrators, legislators, parents, businesses, and the general public. Establish a network among different agencies. Work with radio, television, church organizations, and newspapers to promote awareness. Take advantage of SERVE's activities to work toward state goal.

Anticipated Outcomes: Comprehensive services will be provided to all children. Parent involvement will be increased. Successful programs will be publicized and promoted.

SOUTH CAROLINA

State Goal or Vision: Increase awareness and responsiveness to the need for interagency and parental support in facilitating effective transition. Increase the quality of systemic transition planning and implementation. Increase the involvement of parents in the transition process. Continue the individualized services which characterize the Head Start experience for children and their families. (In these goals, transitions are the experiences and activities which support or enhance continuity of comprehensive services to children and their families.)

Present Status: Efforts to improve transitions are fragmented. Key players do not agree on common goal. Comprehensive services are not provided. A segment of the population continues to fall between the cracks.

Plan of Action: Reconvene symposium participants to develop a more definite state-wide plan. Examine existing structures for coordination. Review pre-existing state plans. Review current data on South Carolina.

Anticipated Outcomes: Successful transition programs will emerge.

Conclusion

*It takes a whole village to
educate a child.*

—African proverb

After two days of discussions, presentations, networking, and state meetings, the challenge for the Southeast—to improve linkages and the transition from pre-kindergarten programs to early elementary school—has been clarified, and plans have been made to address it. Common goals for the region have emerged such as promoting systemic change, and improving communication among key players and between programs. While reports on present status reveal that the Southeast must overcome many obstacles to meeting the challenge—including scarcity of funding and lack of a unified commitment—the many effective practices that were shared suggest that we can succeed. State goals emphasize that activities need to be better publicized and better coordinated, while the Southeast as a whole can look to SERVE to assist its improvement efforts.

In evaluating the symposium, many participants praised the frequent opportunities that they had to network with others through small-group meetings and social events. At the same time, one of the common criticisms of the gathering was that some key players—such as those from health and social service agencies—were underrepresented at the symposium, and their input was needed. These comments suggest that symposium participants acknowledge and accept the imperative for collaboration, and are prepared now to return to their respective states and work together to improve transitions. They recognize that they are responsible for meeting the challenge, and now have some guidelines and connections that will allow them to act.

As the symposium came to a close, Nancy Livesay, the coordinator of SERVEing Young Children, highlighted key words which had been the foundation for the discussions during the two days: challenge, commitment, continuity, communication,

collaboration, cooperation, and community. With themes like these to guide us, we in the Southeast can hope for improved linkages, and can plan for a more coordinated effort to enhance the school experience for children and their families.

*All I really need to know
about how to live and what
to do and how to be I
learned in kindergarten.*

—Robert Fulghum

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